

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**For More Information Contact**

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**ADULTS AND TEENS, GET THE PERTUSSIS VACCINE OR BOOSTER;  
PROTECT INFANTS, YOURSELF AND THOSE AROUND YOU**

(CHRISTIANSBURG, Va.) – Cases of pertussis (whooping cough) are on the rise in Virginia and in most of the United States. Virginia has seen a twofold increase in reported cases since 2007 and a 72 percent increase from 2009 to 2010. In 2010, there were 384 cases of pertussis reported in Virginia, the highest total in six years.

“The single most effective way to prevent pertussis is vaccination,” said Molly O'Dell, MD, director of the New River Health District. “Protection from the childhood vaccine wears off over time, generally in five to ten years, so teens and adults should be revaccinated. Unfortunately, many teens and adults unknowingly contract and spread pertussis. They often are the source of infection for infants too young to be protected by vaccination. All parents, siblings, grandparents and caregivers of infants should make sure their pertussis vaccine is current, to help protect these vulnerable infant populations.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention especially recommend pertussis vaccine for persons 65 or older who have close contact with infants, pregnant women, new mothers who are breastfeeding and health care or childcare professionals who have direct contact with infants and young children.

Pertussis is a highly contagious illness characterized by severe coughing, and is most severe in children less than one year of age. It can cause lung infections, seizures or inflammation of the brain and it can be fatal.

The Virginia Department of Health offers pertussis vaccine at no cost to eligible individuals, including adults who have close contact with infants or young children, and targeting those who are uninsured and underinsured. For more information, call any local health department office:

- Floyd County - 203 S. Locust St., Suite M, Floyd, 540-745-2141;
- Giles County - 120 N. Main St., Pearisburg, 540-921-2891;
- Montgomery County - 210 S. Pepper St., Suite A, Christiansburg, 540-381-7100;
- Pulaski County - 170 4th St. NW, Pulaski, 540-994-5030; or

*(More)*

- Radford City - 212 3rd Ave., Radford, 540-831-5774.

Pertussis vaccine also may be available through your primary care physician or local pharmacy.

For more information on pertussis, visit [www.cdc.gov/pertussis/outbreaks-faqs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/outbreaks-faqs.html) or [www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/Immunization/Pertussis/index.htm](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/Immunization/Pertussis/index.htm), or contact your health care provider.

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